THE GREAT SOUTHERN RAILWAY

OF

CANADA.

LETTER

TO

THE RAILWAY COMMITTEE,

IN FAVOR OF THE

EXTENSIONS CLAIMED

BY THE

WOODSTOCK AND LAKE ERIE RAILWAY,

BY

R. G. BENEDICT,
Chief Engineer.

APRIL, 1855.

PRINTED BY E. R. FRECHETTE, PRINTER,
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TO THE HONORABLE SIR ALLAN MACNAB, M. P. P.,

Chairman, and to the Members of the Committee on Railway and Telegraph Lines.

GENTLEMEN,

A Pamphlet, entitled "THE PROPOSED SOUTHERN RAILWAY," has been laid before your Committee and circulated in the House of Assembly, advocating the merits and claims of a Railway from Amherstburg, on the Detroit River, to the City of Hamilton, to be called the "Hamilton and South Western Railway," signed by H. B. Willson and J. Adam, Esqrs., Delegates on the part of the Petitioners for such Railway. This pamphlet contains statements and assertions in relation to the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway, and the Hamilton and Port Dover Railway, so entirely at variance with the facts and intentions of those Companies, that, as their Chief Engineer, I beg to lay before you the following answer to it.

In order not to occupy your time unnecessarily, I assume that, at the present time, the wants of the country call for the continuation of a line of Railway from the Detroit River to the Suspension Bridge and Buffalo, along the north shore of Lake Erie. The statistical information collected with great care, which will be laid before you by parties applying for an Act to charter a line from St. Thomas to the Detroit River, as likewise the arguments made use of by Messrs. Willson and Adam, are, in my opinion, incontestible evidence of the fact.

The whole distance from Amherstburg to Buffalo and the Suspension Bridge, by the most direct lines that the face of the country will admit of, is as follows: to Buffalo, two hundred and twenty five and one half miles; and to the Suspension Bridge, two hundred and twenty one miles.

This ground is now occupied as follows: from Buffalo to Dunnville, 36½ miles, a Railway is constructed and in operation; from Dunnville to Simcoe, 36¼ miles, a line is chartered, the surveys made and the contract let by the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway Company. From Simcoe to St. Thomas the same Company occupy 16½ miles of the ground, and it is to *prevent a parallel line* for that distance, that they ask for an extension of their charter westward 33¼ miles to St. Thomas, to connect with a line from St. Thomas to the Detroit River.—This 16½ miles is graded ready to receive the rails, and the bridging, fencing and delivery of ties is nearly completed. Any charter for a road running West from Simcoe would inevitably draw away the business of this road and leave the Municipalities who have so generously come forward and loaned their credit for its construction, without the anticipated assistance from its earnings and burdened with the payment of their semi-annual tax until the loans are cancelled.

By extending the Charter to St. Thomas, on the other hand, the road already constructed can be made part and parcel of the main Southern Line; the business, both local and through, can be as well accommodated by it, while the Municipalities will be saved from all risk and be encouraged to give still further assistance, if necessary.

These are the grounds upon which the Company urge upon Your Committee that they have the best and only valid claim to the line from Simcoe to St. Thomas. They have expended in good faith a large sum of money in the construction of works whose paying qualities, without the extension asked for, were at least doubtful, but whose benefits to the district traversed were immense, in the full expectation that the time would soon arrive when the Great Southern Line would be called for by the wants of the country. In order to be prepared to meet that demand and to amalgamate with any line from the Detroit River to St. Thomas, they have made their works of a character to bear comparison with any Railway in Canada, and have likewise caused surveys to be made during the last year over the ground proposed to be occupied by the extension to St. Thomas. To

enable them to carry out these plans, they have now applied for such an extension, and feel confident that Your Committee will not be misled by the arguments used by the friends of the Hamilton and South Western Railway, or consent to such gross injustice as will be done the existing Companies by giving this line to any other party.

As none of the parties applying for charters from the Detroit River to an intersection with the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway, or from Hamilton to Amherstburg, have objected to the line from Dunnville to the Suspension Bridge asked for in the amendment to the charter of that Company, it is taken for granted that no objection will be raised or opposition offered to it, more particularly as the successful opening and constant use of that bridge has established beyond a doubt the entire feasibility of the plan, its importance and its superiority over any other mode of crossing the Niagara River with Railway trains. With the amendments to their charter which they now ask for, the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway will have an unbroken line from St. Thomas to the Niagara River, a distance of 113 miles or about one half of the Great Southern Line, and should the General Railway Bill be passed this session, it will afford capitalists an opportunity to continue the line to the Detroit River, of which they will no doubt gladly avail themselves. By these means the wants of the country will be properly served and no injustice done to those who have expended their money in good faith and already possess a charter for nearly one half of the line.

St. Thomas is very properly the point of junction for many reasons. It is about equi-distant from the Niagara and Detroit rivers and the proper distance for a locomotive engine to travel daily; by this arrangement the machine shops and repairing works of the two companies could be consolidated, saving great expense to both. It is likewise a point whence the traffic, both passengers and freight, can have a choice of routes to Lake Ontario:—First, by the London and Port Stanley Railway (now in progress of construction) to London, and thence either by Great Western Railway to Hamilton, or Grand Trunk Railway to Toronto; second, by continuing on the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway to Simcoe, and from that point by Hamilton and

Port Dover Railway to Hamilton; and third, by the former road to the Suspension Bridge, and thence by the Erie and Ontario Railway to Niagara, the only open winter harbour in Canada, on Lake Ontario. The Erie and Ontario Railway, being already completed and in successful operation, would undoubtedly draw a large amount of traffic to Niagara, even if the advantage of an open winter harbour were not in its favor.

After considering the many facilities offered for traffic to reach Lake Ontario from the line of the Great Southern Railway, as shewn above, the appeal of the Agents of the Hamilton and Southwestern Line to the Grand Trunk and Provincial interests, appears really ridiculous, and the argument used for the purpose of creating a feeling in the minds of the Committee and Members of the House of Assembly, by exciting their fears against "foreign carriers," amounts simply to this, that unless the Hamilton and Southwestern charter is given to the Petitioners, and all other roads made subservient to it, the whole immense freighting business of the Western States and of the counties through which the line passes, will be forced to the Suspension Bridge and into the State of New York, no matter where its destination. It will, I fancy, require rather more logic than is displayed in the pamphlet in question, to induce the Members of the Committee to believe that the large quantities of produce naturally seeking Lake Ontario for an outlet from those fertile counties, can be turned by interested parties into any particular channel, to suit their own interests, regardless of the natural laws that govern trade; or that produce, consigned to New-York from Michigan or Canada, can be turned off from Simcoe to Hamilton, when it is not the *interest* of the shipper to send it by that route. Thousands of barrels of Canadian flour have passed through Hamilton, this winter, to the Suspension Bridge for the New York market, and this fact is known to no one better than the persons who are so fearful that "foreign carriers" will get the control of the Great Southern Railway, and use it to the injury of the carrying trade on Lake Ontario and the River St. Lawrence.

The Great Western Railway was very properly carried through Hamilton, at an extra expense of nearly one million of pounds,

to accommodate the trade of Western Canada and the people of Hamilton. This line is now completed, and the local traffic on it shews that those who estimated that business, however sanguine they might have been, did not in reality approach near the full amount; but had the road been stopped at Hamilton, as was at one time proposed, and not continued to the Suspension Bridge to accommodate the "Foreign Traffic," it would not at this time be paying working expenses. Instead of that we see that, by having a foreign market during the winter, the receipts of the last week exceeded £14,000, that the road is taxed to its utmost capacity and can hardly do the immense traffic, both local and through, that is crowding upon it. This plainly shews, notwithstanding the specious reasoning of Messrs. Willson and Adam to the contrary, that the "Basin of Lake Ontario" is not destined to receive *all* the produce of Canada from Hamilton to the Detroit River, but that it passes through to find a market on the Atlantic when that market is better than those of Montreal and Quebec. A line of Railway from Detroit River to the Suspension Bridge on the route proposed for the Great Southern could have a business equal in extent and not interfere in the least with what is already being done by the Great Western and which legitimately belongs to that road, but no road merely running from Amherstburg to Hamilton could ever pay working expenses. Although the local business would be heavy, yet without the through traffic, both freight and passengers, it would not be a paying line, and if the charter of 150 miles of it were placed in the hands of the Hamilton people, there would be little inducement for the Woodstock and Lake Erie Company to continue their line from Simcoe to Dunnville, or for the Erie and Ontario Railway to extend from the Suspension Bridge to Dunnville. Without such extensions, their proposed road would be dependent upon local business alone for its support.

The delegates, in their pamphlet, say that their "Bill prepared provides for merging the Hamilton and Port Dover Railway Charter into the new one." I believe, and feel justified in making the assertion, that the Petitioners for the Hamilton and South Western Railway, never consulted with the Directors of the Hamilton and Port Dover Railway on this subject, and

that it is not the wish of the Directors of the latter company to have their project merged into a line to the Detroit River. It would at least have been an act of courtesy on the part of the Petitioners for the Hamilton and South Western road to have ascertained the views of those Directors previous to coming before Parliament and the Railway Committee with a Bill ready drawn, asking for a charter, that should compel other lines, already chartered, organised and surveyed, to merge into their line and be controlled by them. I cannot pass over that portion of the statement made by Messrs. Willson and Adam in relation to the Hamilton and Port Dover road which conveys the impression, that the charter of that road is held by persons "*hostile to the interests* of the City of Hamilton." The President of the Company is Sir Allan N. Macnab, the Chairman of Your Committee, and it needs nothing further from me, after making this statement, to show what means have been resorted to, to create false impressions in regard to that road in the minds of the Committee and Members of the House of Assembly. The surveys for the road were commenced in May of last year and completed in August; at which time, on account of the stringency of the money market, it was not thought prudent by the Directors to commence the construction of it. Some members of the Board of Directors have offered to the people of Hamilton to give up this charter to any company organized in Hamilton that will take their stock off their hands and pay the expenses of the company up to the time of the transfer, and this offer would undoubtedly be ratified by the whole Board. They did not think it would be acting the part of prudent business men to commence the construction of the line in the present unsettled state of the public mind, and crisis in money affairs in England, but were perfectly willing to let the people of Hamilton undertake it, and give it their "powerful aid."

Amongst the many other reasons given by Messrs. Willson and Adam to strengthen their claim before the Committee to the right for a charter, they say, that one of the chief movers in the scheme to build a Southern line from Niagara to the Detroit River is an "American citizen," and owns a large property at

the Falls of Niagara. This property, they omit to mention, is in Canada West.

This American citizen, upon whom the writers of the pamphlet seek to throw discredit, is Mr. Zimmerman, a gentleman well known for the magnitude and success of the enterprizes engaged in by him, and whose very name in connection with the project of a Southern railway, through Canada would give it more strength with capitalists in the United States and the people of Canada, than perhaps any that could be selected. Yet his connection with the scheme is used as an argument why the charter should be given to the people of Hamilton who held that of the Great Western Railway eighteen years before they made a movement that resulted in building it; and then it was this "American Citizen," Mr. Zimmerman, who by his zeal and confidence in the work urged them on. The project must indeed be lame that requires such arguments to prop it up.

Messrs. Wilson and Adam state that a Bill has been "smuggled into the House," under a simple notice for amendments to the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway. The notice of the application for the Act was published the requisite length of time, stating what was to be asked for. At the time it appeared, Mr. Willson was living in London (England), and Mr. Adam was engaged in mining operations, not having, at that time, turned his attention to railway projects.

They also say that "both the Erie and Ontario and Woodstock lines are controlled by the same parties, and both run in wrong directions to command a paying business." There is no connection whatever between the two companies; they are controlled by entirely different men and interests, and as regards the statement that they do not command a paying business, it is the strongest argument that the Directors of both these Companies can make use of to induce your Committee to grant the amendments and extensions they ask for. They have expended in good faith, upon their two lines, upwards of £300,000; by granting these additional powers, they will be enabled to make the whole line pay a fair interest upon the capital invested; whereas, by chartering the Hamilton and Southwestern Railway, an-

other " unprofitable enterprise " will be added to the others and fastened upon the country.

If the arguments made use of in this communication and the facts set forth in favor of the amendments to the charter of the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway Company are correct, Your Committee cannot hesitate as to granting the prayer of their petition and rejecting that of the people of Hamilton, whose interests will be equally well served by the construction of the Hamilton and Port Dover line. No injustice will then be done to those parties who have already obtained charters and expended a large sum in partially carrying out this undertaking, relying, as before stated, on obtaining the extension they now ask for. Should there be any points in connection with the above statements upon which Your Committee require information it will afford me much pleasure to furnish it at any time during the present session.

For the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railway and
Harbour Company, and the Hamilton and
Port Dover Railway Company,

R. G. BENEDICT,
Chief Engineer.

RUSSELL'S HOTEL,
Quebec, 23rd. April, 1855.